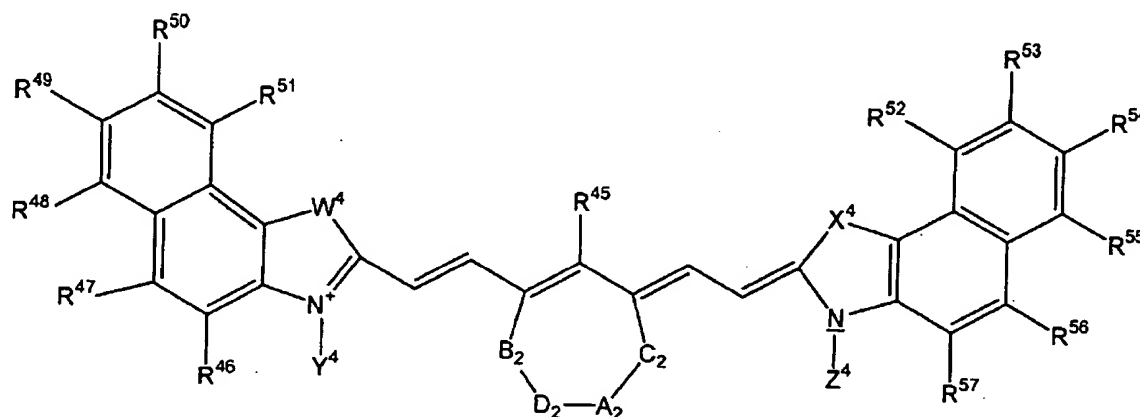


**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace paragraph beginning on page 7, line 14, to page 9, line 13 with the amended paragraph:

In a second embodiment, the inventive composition comprises cyanine dyes of general formula 2.



wherein  $W^4$  and  $X^4$  may be the same or different and are selected from the group consisting of  $-CR^1R^2$ ,  $-O-$ ,  $-NR^3$ ,  $-S-$ , and  $-Se$ ;  $Y^4$  is selected from the group consisting of  $-(CH_2)_a-CONH-Bm$ ,  $-CH_2-(CH_2OCH_2)_b-CH_2-CONH-Bm$ ,  $-(CH_2)_a-NHCO-Bm$ ,  $-CH_2-(CH_2OCH_2)_b-CH_2-NHCO-Bm$ ,  $-(CH_2)_a-N(R^3)-(CH_2)_b-CONH-Bm$ ,  $(CH_2)_a-N(R^3)-(CH_2)_c-NHCO-Bm$ ,  $-(CH_2)_a-N(R^3)-CH_2-(CH_2OCH_2)_b-CH_2-CONH-Bm$ ,  $-(CH_2)_a-N(R^3)-CH_2-(CH_2OCH_2)_b-CH_2-NHCO-Bm$ ,  $-CH_2-(CH_2OCH_2)_b-CH_2-N(R^3)-(CH_2)_a-CONH-Bm$ ,  $-CH_2-$

$(\text{CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-N(R}^3\text{)-}(\text{CH}_2)_a\text{-NHCO-Bm}$ ,  $\text{-CH}_2\text{-(CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-N(R}^3\text{)-CH}_2\text{-}$   
 $(\text{CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_d\text{-CONH-Bm}$ ,  $\text{-CH}_2\text{-(CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-N(R}^3\text{)-CH}_2\text{-(CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_d\text{-NHCO-Bm}$ ,  $\text{-}$   
 $(\text{CH}_2)_a\text{-NR}^3\text{R}^4$ , and  $\text{-CH}_2(\text{CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{NR}^3\text{R}^4$ ;  $Z^4$  is selected from the group  
 consisting of  $\text{-(CH}_2)_a\text{-CONH-Dm}$ ,  $\text{-CH}_2\text{-(CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-CONH-Dm}$ ,  $\text{-(CH}_2)_a\text{-NHCO-}$   
 $\text{Dm}$ ,  $\text{-CH}_2\text{-(CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-NHCO-Dm}$ ,  $\text{-(CH}_2)_a\text{-N(R}^3\text{)-}(\text{CH}_2)_b\text{-CONH-Dm}$ ,  $(\text{CH}_2)_a\text{-N(R}^3\text{)-}$   
 $(\text{CH}_2)_c\text{-NHCO-Dm}$ ,  $\text{-(CH}_2)_a\text{-N(R}^3\text{)-CH}_2\text{-(CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-CONH-Dm}$ ,  $\text{-(CH}_2)_a\text{-N(R}^3\text{)-CH}_2\text{-}$   
 $(\text{CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-NHCO-Dm}$ ,  $\text{-CH}_2\text{-(CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-N(R}^3\text{)-}(\text{CH}_2)_a\text{-CONH-Dm}$ ,  $\text{-CH}_2\text{-}$   
 $(\text{CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-N(R}^3\text{)-}(\text{CH}_2)_a\text{-NHCO-Dm}$ ,  $\text{-CH}_2\text{-(CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-N(R}^3\text{)-CH}_2\text{-}$   
 $(\text{CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_d\text{-CONH-Dm}$ ,  $\text{-CH}_2\text{-(CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-N(R}^3\text{)-CH}_2\text{-(CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_d\text{-NHCO-Dm}$ ,  $\text{-}$   
 $(\text{CH}_2)_a\text{-NR}^3\text{R}^4$ , and  $\text{-CH}_2(\text{CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{NR}^3\text{R}^4$ ;  $A_2$  is a single or a double bond;  $B_2$ ,  
 $C_2$ , and  $D_2$  may be the same or different and are selected from the group consisting  
 of  $\text{-O-}$ ,  $\text{-S-}$ ,  $\text{-Se-}$ ,  $\text{-P-}$ ,  $\text{-CR}^1\text{R}^2$ ,  $\text{-CR}^1$ , alkyl,  $\text{NR}^3$ , and  $\text{-C=O}$ ;  $A_2$ ,  $B_2$ ,  $C_2$ , and  $D_2$  may  
 together form a 6- to 12-membered carbocyclic ring or a 6- to 12-membered  
 heterocyclic ring optionally containing one or more oxygen, nitrogen, or sulfur atom;  
 $a_4$  and  $b_4$  independently vary from 0 to 5;  $R^1$  to  $R^4$ , and  $R^{46}$  to  $R^{57}$  are independently  
 selected from the group consisting of hydrogen,  $C_1\text{-C}_{10}$  alkyl,  $C_5\text{-C}_{20}$  aryl,  $C_1\text{-C}_{10}$   
 alkoxy,  $C_1\text{-C}_{10}$  polyalkoxyalkyl,  $C_1\text{-C}_{20}$  polyhydroxyalkyl,  $C_5\text{-C}_{20}$  polyhydroxyaryl,  $C_1\text{-}$   
 $C_{10}$  aminoalkyl, cyano, nitro, halogen, saccharide, peptide,  $\text{-CH}_2(\text{CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-}$   
 $\text{OH}$ ,  $\text{-(CH}_2)_a\text{-CO}_2\text{H}$ ,  $\text{-(CH}_2)_a\text{-CONH-Bm}$ ,  $\text{-CH}_2\text{-(CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-CONH-Bm}$ ,  $\text{-(CH}_2)_a\text{-}$   
 $\text{NHCO-Bm}$ ,  $\text{-CH}_2\text{-(CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-CH}_2\text{-NHCO-Bm}$ ,  $\text{-(CH}_2)_a\text{-OH}$  and  $\text{-CH}_2\text{-(CH}_2\text{OCH}_2)_b\text{-}$   
 $\text{CO}_2\text{H}$ ; Bm and Dm are independently selected from the group consisting of a  
 bioactive peptide, a protein, a cell, an antibody, an antibody fragment, a saccharide,

*cu* a glycopeptide, a peptidomimetic, a drug, a drug mimic, a hormone, a metal  
chelating agent, a radioactive or nonradioactive metal complex, and an echogenic  
agent; a and c are independently from 1 to 20; and b and d are independently from  
1 to 100.

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